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**SCALE Global Summit LLC**

**Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson**

**Moderator: Mark Jeffries**

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**MARK JEFFRIES:** Fantastic, do take a seat.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Thank you very much. Thank you.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** My goodness. The Right Honourable Boris Johnson. That’s correct. In the US, you call someone a president who’s been a president a “president” forever.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** We reject our titles immediately. There’s a ready supply of former British prime ministers, as I’m sure you will discover. The line stretches out.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** It really does, doesn’t it? Welcome to Vegas.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Great to be here. It’s a real honor. Fantastic to see you all.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Isn’t this a great crowd?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** The last time I was here, I was interviewing Elton John I think.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** My goodness. That was a while ago. Now, I have to ask you something. Before we get to anything else, very important question: how was the coronation for you?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** It was fantastic. I loved it. I had a very good seat. I was able to see His Majesty The King being properly -- it was incredible. It was like an NHS hospital ward. They put these screens around.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes, I saw that.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** And nobody could see what was going on as he was disrobed. Was he fully disrobed? I couldn’t see. I assume so. Then, the Chrism was applied. You wouldn’t apply Chrism to the head of state here in the United States. You might apply all sorts of things, but not Chrism.

I always think it’s very interesting how fascinated people are by our royal family and our monarchy; don’t you think? We have Brits in America -- there are many.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** There are quite a few, yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Quite a few Brits. Nothing wrong with that. It’s a great thing. But there’s one thing I always feel that the great American people secretly hanker after, and that is the crown.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** You know what I mean.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** At some point, they probably would like --

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** The sort of deep national guilt about 1776.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Right. (Laughter.) We are very sorry about that. Yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** There’s a kind of childhood yearning for that monarchical simplicity.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** I think you may be right.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Because at the moment, we’ve got a system. I’m sorry to interrupt.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That’s all right.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** You’ve got a system where the head of state is the same as the head of government. That’s kind of difficult if the head of state happens to be a politically divisive figure.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I’m merely going to sow that thought in your mind.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Thank you. It’s a nice thought. Interestingly, a lot of people don’t know this, you were actually born here in the United States.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I was. I was. I wanted to be close to my mother at the time, as they say, and she was a student at -- and my father was a student. They were students at Columbia University -- a great university. I was very lucky. I was called “Boris” because they met a very kindly American millionaire called Boris who said that it was outrageous that my father wanted to take my mother back to New York from Mexico -- no -- something like that.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** It’s close enough.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I’m getting the story wrong. Anyway, in a Greyhound bus rather than by plane. Boris paid for my plane.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That’s fantastic. Which is why you’re called Boris?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes. So, thank you, Boris, the American millionaire.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Lovely. It’s a great story.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** It’s true.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Now, we have some very important things to discuss. As with any of these conversations, it’s nice just to get a bit of the origin story, the background. Born in the US, but of course, you came to the UK. First call for you after university was journalism.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** You wanted to report on power. What was all that about?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I just think journalism is the most wonderful, brilliant profession. I love it. I love reporting. I love journalism, newspapers, and *All The President’s Men* was the thing that really -- when I was a kid, I remember watching that.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That drew you in, did it?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** And *Scoop,* which of course --

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Of course, yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** -- you’ll know, Evelyn Waugh’s great novel. It’s just a great, great trade. If you think about it today, it’s incredibly important. If you think about what’s happening today and the stuff that really matters to the world today, we need great journalism all over the world, and we need it to be free.

I just want to make a polemical point quickly -- in case we forget to mention this later on -- about Putin and his invasion of Ukraine. And I’ve got to ask people if they really believe that Vladimir Putin would have been so foolish -- made such a catastrophic miscalculation as to invade Ukraine if he had a genuinely free press in Russia telling him what Ukraine was really like. I don’t think he would have done. I don’t think he would have done, by the way, if he’d had rebellious back-benchers such as I’m familiar with.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** You’re very familiar with them.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Telling him not to be so dumb. Some of the things that have happened in the last year or so are great arguments for democracy and for a free press. By the way, while we’re at it, I should mention Evan Gershkovich of the Wall Street Journal who is currently incarcerated by Putin and should be released forthwith. Evan Gershkovich. Let him go right now.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** You mentioned the media, how important journalism is. There is a group of people who will say that, currently, the majority of media feels more like political activism than actual honest reporting. Where do you sit on that?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Look, I think that’s true. I think journalists are very often engaged and participate in the public -- but that’s fine. Their activities are being invigilated in real time by everybody else -- by all the other journalists who are just as ruthless as they are. If they say it’s inaccurate or tendentious or whatever, then that’s immediately pointed out. That’s a good and wholesome thing.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** So, you’re not worried about the state of media as it is right now?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** No. I think it’s in an incredible state of growth and development. Nor, by the way, am I remotely worried about AI. I’m not worried about ChatGPT.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Why are you not worried?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Are you worried about ChatGPT, all you brilliant investors?

**MARK JEFFRIES:** I think we’re excited by it.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I think it’s fantastic. I plugged in ChatGPT the other day. I subscribed to it. I asked it to write an essay. I wrote something about knife crime in London in my days many years ago when I was fighting knife crime in London. I put in a few paragraphs of stuff about how we beat knife crime. I said, “ChatGPT, put this into dactylic Latin hexameters in the style of Virgil.” Because why not?

I hardly finished typing when he started chuntering away. But what was so wonderful was that it couldn’t do it very well. (Laughter.)

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Did it disappoint you?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** No, I said, “Have another go.” I gave it some lessons. It still wasn’t very --

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Still wasn’t there?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** So, we’ve got nothing to worry about, folks.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Fantastic.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** We’ve got nothing to worry about. What this will be is a tool that will help us and our children to acquire knowledge fast, but clearly, there are going to be some things that we’ll have to sort out, some grand rules about sourcing and everything else -- bias -- but that’s fine.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** It is fine. By the way, you mentioned children. Congratulations. You have another one on the way, I believe.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes. You’re very well informed. Yes. A very expensive event -- happy and expensive. My wife, thankfully, isn’t watching this. It’s going to be great.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Marvelous. So, back to the story. So, you’re a journalist, but suddenly you think, “Actually, I would rather be on the other side. I’m going to go into politics.” What drove that?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, it’s interesting, Mark, because you just mentioned that you knew John Major, or you’d seen John Major.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** For years, I’ll tell you what it was. I used to write columns. I did a lot of reporting, and then I really became a columnist. I used to chuck these tremendous rocks over the garden wall and listen to the tinkle of the greenhouse. It’s a fantastic feeling of power without responsibility, the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages.

After a while, I read a particularly tough piece about John Major. Poor guy. I walked into the office the following morning and Bill Deedes, you may remember, who was the former editor of the Daily Telegraph.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes. Yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Lord Deedes, as he became. Also a brilliant guy -- very elderly guy. He said, “I say, old boy, that should be hard.” I thought, “You’re right.” It’s easier to knock over people’s sandcastles than to build your own. I felt as a journalist I was doing too much criticism and not enough trying to do things myself. I had a midlife crisis and became a politician.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes, you did. You met with success, because before you can turn around, you’re mayor of London.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I know. It was a dizzying ascent. They basically had absolutely nobody else who would do it.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That’s what I remember.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I’ve got to level with this audience in the candor of this confessional here in Las Vegas -- we are in Las Vegas?

**MARK JEFFRIES:** We are in Las Vegas. Yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** The closing period -- one of the closing periods of my many closing periods of my political career. I can tell you that -- where was I?

**MARK JEFFRIES:** You were talking about being the mayor of London. There was no one else.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes, that’s right. There was absolutely nobody else. They’d offered the candidacy to all sorts of people. Nobody thought that a conservative could win in London. That was the problem. Nobody else would do it. I fought a very hard fight, particularly about the need to make the city safer. It is an incredibly safe city, by the way, as anybody who’s been to London will know -- one of the safest big cities on earth. Yes, it is.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** There’s issues, but you’ve got to put them in context.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, let me tell you. In the golden era -- the Augustine epoch of 2008-2016 -- crime, I can tell you, crime fell in London by 20%. The murder rate was cut in half -- by 50%. You cannot fudge the murder rate statistics, my friends. You cannot hide a corpse, right? Well, you can. We got the murder rate for several years running to fewer than 100 murders per year in a city -- listen to this -- a city of nine million. How many in New York? Don’t be chauvinist. Don’t be excessively patriotic about what we did in London, but we got it down to about 1/5 of the New York murder rate.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Can you share very quickly how you did that?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes, I can. I’ll tell you. We got lots of police out on the street. The police are brilliant. They come to you, and they say, “We’ve got a fixed sum of money for policing. What we can do, Mr. Mayor, is achieve all your objectives but with fewer police officers.” You brilliant, mathematically-minded people can work out what they’re trying to do there. If you have a fixed sum of money and fewer people to pay, obviously you can pay each individual more money. They worked that one out, but I said no. I said I wanted to have more offices on the streets of London, I wanted to keep our city safe. We did some pretty tough things. We did a lot of stop and search. I think you’ve called it “stop and frisk.” What did you call it here?

**MARK JEFFRIES:** It was in New York, yes, it was stop and frisk.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** That’s wrong. We did a lot of stop and search and it worked. And the people who wanted us to do stop and search and to take the knives off young black kids in London was the mothers of those kids. It was the kindest, most loving thing we could possibly have done. I can tell you, it worked.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** How many years were you mayor?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Eight.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Do you think that was a role that set you up to become prime minister?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I think it certainly didn’t do any harm. It was a fantastic experience. The difficulty with being mayor of London was that it was basically a very pyramidical structure. I didn’t have any real opponents in the ecosystem. I was able to do whatever. When I wanted to get something done, I didn’t have to worry about people’s opposition. I was able to just get on and do it.

So, I got out of parliament, and I didn’t really prepare for the job of being a prime minister, which is very difficult. There, you’ve got to manage your back benches, you’ve got to manage the whole party.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** And that really happened very quickly. Theresa May was the prime minister. She resigns. You, of course, are elevated to leader of the party, therefore prime minister. Are you actually saying you didn’t feel ready? You didn’t feel prepped for that?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** No, no, that would be absurd. I’d done stuff like this all my life. That wasn’t the issue. As soon as I got in, shortly thereafter, we won the biggest electoral victories for about 40 years, the biggest share of the vote since 1979. We won the biggest majority for the Conservatives for a very long time -- about 80 seats. That was most surprising. It came after about 10 years of Tory government. You would have expected us to be starting to wane.

Things began by going tremendously well. We got Brexit done and we seemed to be advancing on all fronts. I did a huge amount -- we recruited yet more police officers. We launched a massive infrastructure campaign to build Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2 and put gigabit broadband everywhere and all this kind of stuff. It was fantastic. Skills, skills, skills. But then we had COVID and COVID was a big problem.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Let’s talk about a couple of things you mentioned there, Brexit first. Brexit has been in place now for quite a few years, of course. What was, do you think, the reasoning behind the result of that vote originally and what do you think it means for the UK and Europe going forward?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I think the reasons for Brexit were extremely good. The UK is a very old democracy. The ambition of our EU friends and partners was really to turn the EU into a single federal state -- *e pluribus unum* as I think it says on the dollar bills. Does it?

**MARK JEFFRIES:** I think it might, yes. That was not something that the British population really had signed up for back in 1973. The people wanted to be able to take back control of their democracy. Brexit proved its worth pretty much immediately during the pandemic -- well, not immediately, but after a year or so, because we were able to do the vaccines in a different way from other European countries. We were able to -- because we’d taken back control of our medical regulation agency, the medical health regulations agency. We’d come out of this thing called the European Medicines Agency.

We were able to approve vaccines faster than any other country in the world. It is a fact that under the government I led, we got a vaccine into people’s arms -- into somebody’s arm -- faster than any other country in the world. We were the first approved effective vaccine, the first country to put an approved, effective vaccine into somebody’s arm.

The result of that was that we had a very, very fast vaccine rollout. We were able to vaccinate our population faster than our EU friends and partners. Again, I say that in no particular spirit of chauvinism, but it was very important. We had to get it done fast, and we did get it done fast. I don’t know what the view of this audience would be about vaccination, but I think it made a huge difference to the pandemic. The result was that lots of elderly people who might not have been protected from what was, frankly, a lethal disease, got that protection. I would say to you that Brexit saved lives, and maybe quite a lot of lives.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That’s interesting.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** By March 2021, I think we vaccinated about 45% of the UK population. The rest of the EU -- or the EU -- had done about 10%. There was a big, big difference.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** I want to come back to Brexit in terms of trade in a minute, but on COVID, on the pandemic, when you look back at that time, when it was the lockdowns, the vaccination, a lot of the PR and the messaging that came out, would you have done anything differently?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I don’t know. Well, there’s an inquiry going, obviously, into the whole thing.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes, indeed.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** That will take ages, and doubtless, it will find there were lots of things we should have done differently. I feel very acutely that we had to take a lot of incredibly difficult decisions to do with lockdowns and the timing of lockdowns. I don’t know what people feel about those now. It felt to me at the time that the lockdowns really made a difference for the better. And I think the first one seems pretty clearly to have stopped the “R” -- the reproduction rate of the disease from continuing to climb and probably saved a lot of lives.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Were there arguments behind the scenes between advisors and 10 Downing Street and you?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I’m sure that everybody had their own doubts and anxieties about nonpharmaceutical interventions, stopping people doing things in the normal way, but it was very hard. In the absence of drugs, in the absence of vaccines, it was very hard to see an alternative.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Now, I have to ask you this because it’s big news in the UK, of course, even here in the US, more allegations and you are heading back to the UK very shortly. What is your position on the allegations they’re making?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** These are just the type of thing that you would expect and I think that -- I don’t know exactly which allegations you’re talking about, but whichever they are, they’re almost certainly without foundation, baseless, groundless, and whatever activities -- if you’re talking about me not handing over the WhatsApps, I was handing over any number of WahtsApps, notebooks, the whole lot. They can have everything. If it’s about events in No. 10, I don’t think anything unlawful took place. I’m happy to demonstrate that.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Thank you for answering the question. We were also talking about Brexit. Let’s finish off on Brexit, because you’ve already given us one good reason why it was positive for the country. But what about trade? What about business? Does the country of the United Kingdom, is it at a disadvantage now because of Brexit or the reverse?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** No. It’s at a great advantage. I’ve tried to give one thing we were able to do that we would have been able to do. There are loads of other things. We talk about AI and new technology, well, the EU traditionally approaches these things with a very regulatory frame of mind and there are pressures from EU governments to ban AI. The Italians are talking about banning it -- banning ChatGPT -- which is crazy. Absolutely crazy.

If you look at things like genomic editing, the EU’s had a historic ban on that, which we’re now lifting because we’re out of the EU. We’re doing things differently when it comes to things like Solvency II or MiFID -- the EU financial regulations. That will be a great boon to the UK and to the UK economy. Invest in London, folks; invest in the UK because it’s going to be -- particularly the tech sector, not just in London, it’s across the whole of the UK.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Let’s move on to the subject of Ukraine. This was discussed at length yesterday on the stage. You were one of the first world leaders to walk the streets of Kiev while missiles were falling. This war is going on a lot longer than the experts predicted. NATO and the United States have spent countless billions on it. Where does it go from here? What does success look like for Ukraine?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, the first thing I want to say is thank you to the American people and to the United States of America for supporting Ukraine in the way that you have. Basically, the United States has stopped the extinction of a sovereign European democracy. The huge sums of money that the US has invested in military support has been absolutely crucial. If the US hadn’t stepped up in the way that you did, things might have gone very differently. I’m proud of what the UK did as well. I think the way this ends is going to be victory for Ukraine.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** What does that victory look like?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Expelling Putin’s troops from Ukraine. It’s not for us to decide what that looks like or what victory looks like. That’s for the Ukrainians to work out. They have a perfect right, in my view, to recapture the entire Ukrainian territory that voted for independence in 1991. They can go back -- they should be able to go back to those borders. It’s not for us to decide.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Does Putin take his tanks and go home and just carry on as normal?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Look, Ukrainian victory will come, I think, with the reconquest of that stretch between the Crimea and Russia -- the so-called “land bridge.” They don’t have to take all of it to deal a pretty devastating blow to Putin. They just need to punch through to the Sea of Azov. Then, they’ve basically got a massive strategic gain. It’s quite likely that something like that will happen this year, this summer.

The thing is not to worry about Putin and his personal psychodrama. We’re not here to manage his ego or his political future. He’s going to be fine. He’s got a robust temperament, I’m sure. He is not -- repeat -- not going to use a nuclear weapon. I don’t want to spend too long talking about this, because it’s ridiculous. He would immediately forfeit all Chinese support. He’d lose the support of the countries in the middle -- the swing voters -- the Indians, all those who are cutting him too much slack at the moment. He’d terrify the Russian population -- actually terrify them because they wouldn’t know what reprisals they might face. It wouldn’t work even if he used a tactical nuclear weapon, the Ukrainians would fight on.

Once he’s been defeated -- and he will be defeated. There’s quite a high chance, actually, of a complete Russian military collapse in Ukraine. When that happens, it will be a fantastic blow for freedom and democracy around the world. It will mean that the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area is safer, more secure, more stable because we remove the threat of further advances by Putin, whether in the Baltic States or Georgia or Poland or wherever.

Plus, it has immediate -- it’s already had, I think, a very important stabilizing effect in Asia because if you’re Xi Jinping or you’re a Chinese leader who’s thinking about unifying China by taking aggressive action against Taiwan, I think that this has massively increased the strategic ambiguity and the risk.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** You were setting an example, is that what you’re saying?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I think it’s showing that the west is willing to stand up for democracy. Who would have thought that the US -- that Joe Biden -- was going to send quite so much by way of military assistance? Who would have thought that the UK was going to send so much? There was quite a lot of skepticism to begin with in our foreign policy establishment on both sides of the Atlantic about doing this. It has turned out to be the right thing.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Is it limitless?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** No. So far, it’s what? 5% of the US defense budget. So far, probably 0.2% of US GDP. As an investment in the security of the world, I think it’s very cost effective. It doesn’t have to be limitless. What it needs to be is fast. The thing we’ve learned over the last year is that we always end up giving them the thing we wouldn’t give them six months previous.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Absolutely right.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Cut to the chase. Give it to them now.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Time is running tight, so there’s a couple of other things I wanted to ask you. As a prime minister, you met many world leaders. Why don’t we do a quickfire round? I’ll name a world leader, and just tell me what comes to your mind first.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** John Major. Great guy.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Of course. Let’s start with France, Macron.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Surprisingly small, keen on dogs. It’s a nice thing.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Good input. You spent a lot of time with Angela Merkel, Germany.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes. Very good sense of humor. Likes to drink.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Really? That’s good. That’s good.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** You’re just being honest. That’s fair enough.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I just tell you. A very funny husband, too.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Really?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That famous German sense of humor right there.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Ja! Her husband is called -- I think he’s called Joachim.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Right. Interesting. Next world leader, you spent a lot of time with former President Donald Trump.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes. Very tall -- quite tall. He gives the impression of being tall. Huge bouncy castle personality. What else? What can I tell you that you don’t know?

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Just your impressions.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Look, I got on very well with him, I’ve got to admit. I don’t agree with some of the things he’s said at all, particularly about Ukraine. I’m concerned about that. I don’t know exactly where he is on all that now.

I’ll tell you something psychologically, you may have this feeling, too. It’s very, very hard to dislike anybody who’s actually very kind and nice about you.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That’s very true.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Do you know what I mean?

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** You shrink.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Because they’ve said nice things about you?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** It’s a human failing, isn’t it?

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes. Always. One more world leader -- Putin.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Putin. Again, surprisingly small. Really quite elflike. (Laughter.) If not actually sort of goblinlike, to be honest. I wouldn’t say he’s going pointy ears, but he speaks in a very soft -- and he’s very, very polite and speaks surprisingly good English.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That’s interesting. You never hear him speak English.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** He speaks excellent English.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** That’s fascinating.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Don’t believe a word of it. He’s picking it all up. Well, I know some other peculiar things about him, but I shouldn’t tell you.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Well do that at the afterparty -- whatever that is. So, the other thing that I wanted to talk to you about before our time runs out is just, generally, your economic view. We have predictions of major recession here, in Europe. I just spent two weeks in Europe in Frankfurt and Prague. There’s definitely a darker mood over there than there is here. What is your feeling?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** People used to say that if we voted to leave the European Union that we would have soaring unemployment, right? It would be disaster. You probably don’t remember this. Investment would flee. We’ve got record investment coming. We’ve got the lowest unemployment since 1974, when you probably weren’t even born.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** I was six.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** You were only six. Lowest unemployment since Mark was six years old in the UK. Lowest unemployment.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Correct.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** This economic conjuncture is very different from the worrying times I remember in the ‘70s, the ‘80s, the ‘90s. We’ve got still massive, massive demand. What we lack is labor. What we had in the ‘90s, early ‘80s, ‘70s, even to a certain extent in 2008, was a shock that put people out of work. We’re not seeing that. We’re not seeing that. And it’s different. I’m not as bearish as some people are. I think that Europe needs to learn from the United States, and I think our tax rates are too high. We are spending too much -- full stop. We need to sort that out.

The UK, in particular, having done Brexit, needs to put up a big “invest here” sign by doing some things like corporation tax, whatever, that really signals things are different.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** One serious question before we end: trust in government, trust in experts, at the moment seems to be at basically an all-time low. What do you put this down to?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I put it down to the fact that the experts and the governments and all people, figures, and authority of any kind, whether they’re politicians or leading journalists or whoever now face daily challenge and exposure by the -- I haven’t even got it in my pocket anymore -- but by that thing -- by the internet, by ChatGPT, by people’s ability to verify, cross-check everything that they say. So, I think that trust in experts is directly commensurate -- the fall in trust in experts is directly commensurate with the increase -- the massive increase -- in the levels of knowledge and sophistication of everybody else who now knows what rubbish they’re talking.

When they’re told that if they leave the European Union there will be massive unemployment, they’re able to think about it. They’re able to look things up, and lo and behold, the lay people -- the nonexperts -- turn out, very often, to be right. And I think that’s one of the factors. That is a good thing. What’s happened now is that a lot of these so-called experts are basically being disintermediated by the fantastic profusion of information that everybody has. That’s good. It’s part of democracy. It’s essential for democracy.

Get back to the point I began with. By the way, it’s one of the reasons why democracy is going to continue to win. All the vaccines were produced by western industrial -- the effective ones were produced by western, industrialized democracies. All the great innovations are still basically happening in the democracies. We need to stick up for them and believe in it.

Don’t worry too much about -- I think democracy in the US, as far as I can see, is in pretty robust health; the same is obviously true in the UK. And if that means that politicians get slung out of office, then that’s a good and cleansing thing. “Please wrap,” it says.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Yes. I can see that. I don’t think they mean music, do they?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I don’t. I will conclude with this point. It’s a good, good thing for democracy to have a powerful media and a well-educated public -- levels of trust. People probably trusted Stalin or Ceaușescu -- huge mistake. Huge mistake.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** So, with our time up, last question: what is next for Boris Johnson?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, I’ve got to fix my internet access now that I’ve been banging on about it. I managed to put a lot of internet across the UK. It went up from 7% to 70% gigabit broadband. But one of the reasons I believe so strongly in the future of the United States is that in order to put internet into this wonderful new house I’ve bought in Oxfordshire, I have to use Elon Musk. I cannot tell you how much pain it is causing me. I’ve had to write a check or pay some cash to Elon Musk’s Starlink system. It’s absolutely preposterous.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** But you’ve got internet.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** But at least I’m going to have fantastic gigabit internet.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** We will have to leave it there.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Thank you very much.

**MARK JEFFRIES:** Boris Johnson, thank you so much.

(Applause.)

END